

February 2024



IAB EUROPE'S GUIDE TO QUALITY

iabeurope.eu

iab•europe

Contents

Section 1 – Introduction – Why is Quality Important	Page 3
Section 2 – Definition – What Is Quality	Page 8
Section 3 – Ad Fraud	Page 10
Section 4 – Brand Safety	Page 15
Section 5 – Viewability	Page 25
Section 6 – In-Geo	Page 28
Section 7 – Creative Execution and User Experience	Page 29
Section 8 - Privacy & Consent – The Transparency & Consent Framework (TCF)	Page 35
Section 9 – Sustainability	Page 38
Section 10 – Best Practices In The Industry	Page 40
Section 11 – Industry Standards	Page 42
Section 12 – Industry Quality Initiatives Across Europe	Page 46
Section 13 – IAB Europe Resources	Page 47
Section 14 – Summary	Page 49
Section 15 – Case Studies	Page 50
Contributors	Page 57

Section 1: Introduction

In September 2021, IAB Europe released its 'Guide to Quality' to help and support all stakeholders in the supply chain on being accountable and responsible for the reputation of digital advertising. The guide looks at what makes a quality campaign from both a brand's and consumer's perspective by detailing best practices and practical examples for viewability, brand safety and suitability, ad fraud, campaign creativity and privacy and consent. The guide is a call for action that Quality is something that all stakeholders have to strive for. The guide starts by defining what quality is and details how it can be achieved.

Why is quality important?

Media quality is an ever-expanding topic that pertains to brand safety, brand suitability, viewability, user experience and advertising fraud, across established channels such as desktop and in-app, but also across emerging areas of concern such as new channels (CTV, gaming, audio, digital OOH).

Quality matters for several reasons and can be addressed through two main angles: the ads environment in which the ad will be played and the ad itself. More recently an additional parameter has been added: the broadcasting sustainability of the ad itself.

The environment in which an ad loads is one of the primary factors that will influence the user's perception of, and reception to, the brand's messaging. A thoughtful creative package dumped into a chaotic or low-end inventory environment is a good way to waste the first impression the user may have of a company and its products. When assessing the media quality of a given online inventory, advertisers and agencies want to understand the risk associated with an ad impression serving on a channel with inappropriate or unsuitable content.

More tactically, running ads on low-quality sites increases the probability that the ad may never be seen at all or, if it has been seen, it may be ignored or go unnoticed. This is particularly true if, for example, the page is cluttered with other ad units as well, or if the page takes so long to load that the ad doesn't render until the user has already scrolled past it or even left the page entirely.

Ad saturation can also have a negative impact: too many ads on the same page, too long ads adpod (tunnel of ads) in a preroll or midroll. Last, creativity is of course of prime importance taking into account the viewer experience. CBA (Coalition for Better ads) is a good source to start with.

Made for Advertising (MFA) media quality concerns are increasingly top of mind for advertisers. In June 2023, the ANA released a [report](#) claiming that 21% of impressions and 15% of spending are wasted on MFA sites. Generative AI is being used to create MFA sites that offer little value to users and are considered low quality. While MFA sites are typically not fraudulent, they do deliver poor performance for advertisers and offer a poor user experience.

Advertising which doesn't have the chance to make an impact is considered unsustainable. In 2023, making media **sustainable** must be a priority. Understanding the emissions from digital advertising is a complex process because there are so many hidden layers to take into account. To get a full picture of advertising emissions, advertisers need to be able to analyse the entire production and distribution process.

Ad buyers can influence their campaign carbon footprints by engaging in supply path optimization (SPO) efforts that route spend through paths that have a higher share of low carbon & renewable energy powering their data centres.

Quality media is also a differentiator for premium publishers in a market that increasingly commoditised the table stakes criteria of validity, viewability, and brand safety. By going above and beyond those signals and achieving quality standards that stand apart from a peer group, publishers can better monetise their inventory by providing premium environments that align with brand messaging efforts.

For advertising to make an impact, ads must meet certain quality criteria across channels, formats and platforms. Absent that clarity, marketers would lose confidence in their digital investments, impacting not only the quality of content produced and consumed online, but the ability for consumers to access it for free.

The consumer's perspective

Understanding consumers' emotional responses to ads, as well as their perceptions of them, in high versus low quality environments will better equip marketers for planning their digital campaigns. The quality of content in which an ad appears matters to consumers and has a significant impact on their fondness of a brand. IAS ran a survey, [The Ripple Effect](#) to get an understanding from consumers how important high quality content was for them.

The study revealed that seeing ads beside high-quality content is important for the majority (91%) of UK consumers and drives greater returns, with 65% of consumers more likely to engage with ads when surrounded by high-quality content.

The study indicates widespread favourability for premium-quality ad placements. Consumers across markets not only share the UK's preference for high-quality ad environments – additionally France (90%), the U.S. (83%), and Japan (82%) – but also an inclination towards tailoring. Almost nine in ten (87%) UK consumers perceive ad relevance as important, alongside 93% of respondents in France and 80% in the U.S.

The higher likelihood of consumer engagement when surrounded by high-quality content creates a ripple effect, climbing to 69% in Spain and 65% in the UK and France

Consumer response swings in a negative direction as ad quality drops. Almost nine in ten (88%) UK consumers are annoyed when ads appear next to low quality content and the chances of engagement fall, with only two in 10 (22%) likely to engage with an online ad. Annoyance is also reflected at an international level, with poor placement driving irritation for 94% of consumers in Spain, 92% in France and 83% in Germany.

Marketers need to continue to make a concerted effort in ensuring ads are run in high-quality environments, to not only reach consumers, but make better connections with them as well. A practical way to ensure high media quality is to optimise media buys by using pre-bid filters. Pre-Bid filters give marketers access to verified/vetted inventory which matches their campaign strategy. This way, advertisers minimise impression wastage which directly affects the campaign budgets.

The Brand Impact

So how does quality impact on brand favourability, memorability, and brand recall? According to DoubleVerify's 2022 [Four Fundamental Shifts in Advertising & Media](#), consumers hold brands partially responsible for fighting against mis- and disinformation — thus making quality a crucial component of strategy and optimisation. In fact, nearly two thirds (63%) would be more likely to question a brand or product's quality, reputation or value if they saw it advertised beside mis- and disinformation, and 69% value brands who fight against misinformation or disinformation. Quality starts with transparency — first into the device and app, then into the content itself. With that trust and confidence in place, brands can make sound decisions in their media investments across all channels.

And advertisers are just one part of the ad ecosystem. For an ad-supported ecosystem to thrive, publishers also need to be able to monetise their content, it's how they pay their journalists and ensure consumers can continue to benefit from the reporting they provide.



Section 2: Definition – What is Quality

The goal of advertising is for the brand message to be viewed by a real human in an appropriate environment. Achieving these criteria results in a higher probability to drive attention by the user and hence create an effective ad experience that produces positive business outcomes.

Quality media is broadly defined as the subset of inventory in which a high probability exists for advertising to be effective. While the specific quality signals may vary from one advertiser to another – for example, some marketers may prioritise fast-loading pages or ad clutter, others may want to stay away from newly-registered domains, while others may prioritise the content on the page – we believe that creating standards for media quality that incorporate industry best practices and prioritise the user experience will raise the probability for users to be engaged with ads and, therefore, to drive business KPIs.

When it comes to what makes a successful campaign, and before brands can even start thinking about specific performance KPIs, it's important to have a clear foundation of quality. From an ad tech perspective, quality is a prerequisite to performance and it's the combination of quality and performance that really drives the success of campaigns.

Components of Quality

Quality comes in a lot of different forms, but can be boiled down into two components. First, there are core components to quality that every ad should adhere to, including:

- An ad needs to have the opportunity to be seen by a real-human
- An ad must be placed in a contextually brand safe environment (no violence, hate, defamation, etc.)
- An ad should not fund illegal activities (piracy, counterfeit goods, etc.), unwanted/forced user experiences (malware), or via deceptive tactics such as hidden links, false claims, pop-ups/unders, or unwanted redirects.
- An ad opportunity must be transparently auctioned, meaning no features are being masked or misrepresented (domain, app, device, etc.)
- All local legal laws and regulations should be adhered to, including consumer privacy

The second component to quality is driven by the advertiser and their marketing strategy. Examples of these include:

- Geo-restrictions: Ensure messaging is only seen in relevant geo's
- Brand Suitability: Ensure messaging is only seen adjacent to content that makes sense for the brand
- Audience: Only target audiences that are interested in the products or services messaging
- Time of day: Only serve ads during a given time of the day
- Environment: Only serve ads on TV's, Websites, Mobile Applications

At the end of the day, it's all about a value exchange, publishers are creating content that is valuable to consumers and advertisers are looking to reach those consumers to drive lift in their products and services. Every impression is not the same and each has different attributes that dictate the quality and value.





AD FRAUD

Section 3: Ad Fraud

For advertising to perform, it must be seen by real people. As we know, fraud follows the money. Without ad fraud detection, the impact of fraud can be significant as a brand's advertising efforts are wasted on non-humans.

Fraudulent and invalid traffic are highly prevalent in the online advertising ecosystem, which causes significant negative impact, including:

- Lost revenue for advertisers; decreased yield for publishers
- Questionable measurement metrics
- Negative brand association — specifically related to criminal enterprise, malware, poor consumer experience and environments out of alignment with brand positioning
- Poor consumer experience, making solutions like ad blockers even more attractive
- Overall lack of trust

Right now, ad fraud accounts for one out of every three dollars spent by digital advertisers – and unless a dramatic change is made, Forrester predicts that the industry stands to lose \$10.9 billion from fraudulent advertising.

This means that fraud detection and prevention tools must be even more sophisticated, focusing on three key tenets: coverage, speed and accuracy. Furthermore, these tools need to be applied across all media, platforms, devices and fraud types.

So, where are we at right now with ad fraud, why has it not been resolved, and what action can we all take to help stop it?

DoubleVerify, as part of its 2023 [Global Insights Report](#), reported post-bid fraud/SIVT rates of around 1.1%. Post-bid fraud/SIVT rates, however, this does not tell the whole story. These figures are based on advertisers who are already managing their fraud as part of a formal verification program. For unmanaged accounts, fraud rates reach as high as 5.1% - an increase of 367% compared with managed campaigns. So even though fraud can be successfully managed, it has not disappeared and brands need to remain vigilant.

Fraud also fluctuates depending on the country and the device. According to the IAS Media Quality Report, for campaigns optimised against fraud, it remained low – at 1.4% for desktop display and 1.3% for desktop video. In the EMEA specifically, campaigns optimised against fraud sat below the global average; desktop display sat at 1.1%, while desktop video was 1.0%. Similarly in mobile environments display sat at 0.2% and video 0.2% – with the global averages sitting at 0.4% and 0.3% respectively. This is a marked reduction when compared to campaigns not optimised against fraud. For these campaigns, desktop display saw a rate of fraud at 10.7% and desktop video at 7.9%. It is clear that advertisers who don't do due diligence are wasting a significant amount of their budget. And as high CPM attracts fraudsters, according to DV, the fraud on CT can go above 10% for unprotected campaigns, mainly due to SSAI environment (see below)

Ad fraud is a problem that shows little sign of disappearing any time soon, but there are ways you can help the industry to beat the bots.

Ad Fraud - Best Practices

Optimised-against-fraud campaigns in Western Europe are 10 times less likely to be exposed to fraud than those lacking protection. The argument to put ad fraud prevention technology in place is quite simply, undeniable.

Here are 10 tips to successfully prevent fraud in your next campaign:

1. Vet your supply by using technological and manual checks.
2. Use verification and fraud solutions that can confirm ads were delivered to the desired sites, devices, and geographies.
3. Use fraud solutions that have been accredited for both General and Sophisticated IVT.
4. Measure fraud across all campaigns to understand anti-fraud performance.
5. Vet your vendors and partners; ask how they measure for malicious bots and other forms of IVT.
6. Implement blocking technology or use anti-targeting technology to avoid infected machines or pages with historically high fraud levels.
7. Use pre-bid filtering to avoid fraud in programmatic buys.
8. Where needed, use exclusion and/or inclusion lists.
9. If it's too good to be true, it probably is. Focus less on low CPMs and more on hitting real KPIs tailored to your campaign goals.
10. Offer and request more visibility and transparency into where programmatic advertising is being served.

Ad Fraud and Connected TV

Another cause for concern is fraud seen on newer channels like Connected TV (CTV), which represents one of the fastest growing content consumption channels in Europe. In fact, CTV viewership has grown to reach 50% of households (representing 61.5 million households) in Europe's five biggest markets, according to a SpotX report. Unfortunately, the popularity of the platform makes it attractive to fraudsters..

Fraud on CTV typically falls into these categories:

- **Spoofing:** Fraudsters may buy lower-price mobile or desktop display inventory for less than a \$1 CPM, change the ad calls to resemble premium CTV video inventory, and resell the inventory at CPMs frequently greater than \$20. This is also called VAST arbitrage scheme, these deceptive practices can result in significant financial gains for the fraudsters involved.
- **Fraudulent apps:** Fraudsters can easily create their own CTV apps and release them to both open and closed app stores. Hundreds of apps are out there with few downloads, but millions of impressions. Some fraudsters create ostensibly legitimate tech tools that they offer to app creators; these tools are then used as a "trojan horse" that allows them to commit fraud - all unbeknownst to the app developer.
- **SSAI fraud:** Server-side Ad Insertion (SSAI) technology has some amazing benefits - like reducing latency, thereby speeding delivery and improving the viewing experience. Unfortunately, it can be leveraged to generate fraud at scale. Fraudsters can either create their own servers or buy into cloud space to completely falsify the information about an impression opportunity (app/IP/device/etc.) and generate completely fake traffic. Imagine millions or billions of impressions firing off from a server farm. And because measurement doesn't happen directly on the CTV device, but at the server level, it can be even more challenging to detect.
- **Bot fraud:** As on other devices, bot fraud occurs when impressions are served to a fraudulent, non-human requestor. Often, bots will target CTV inventory by spoofing the device type to appear as if they are a CTV device.

Whilst DoubleVerify's Global Insights Report observed a significant 62% year-over-year growth in global CTV ad impression volume in 2022, quality infractions have also increased. In fact, DV saw a 69% increase in bot fraud across CTV in 2022, and overall CTV fraud schemes have tripled from 2020 to 2022.

Understanding the nuances of digital ad fraud, especially in the age of accelerated digitisation and increased advertising budgets, is immensely critical. If left unchecked, ad fraud can lead to wasted media spends, skewed performance metrics, a decrease in advertisers' bottom line and, most importantly, a negative brand association.

That is why it is important to ensure that a brand's digital ads are safe and delivered to a real person.

Here are a few best practices to ensure brands are protected:

- Understand ad fraud and its techniques
- Work with a third-party verification provider to measure and protect campaigns
- Work with fraud-certified platforms, especially on CTV, to ensure that the content is not compromised
- Ensure the publishers that buyers are working with have adopted ads.txt
- Ask questions - DSPs, SSPs, and verification providers are trying to protect advertisers from fraud and can help better address any concerns
- And finally, do a sniff test - if it seems too good to be true, it probably is

Ad fraud remains one of the digital advertising industry's biggest hurdles. However, thanks to the overall advances in verification tools and machine learning technology, our industry is actively working together to build solutions that limit the influence of the fraudsters across all channels, formats and devices. For more information on ad fraud, please read IAB Europe's 'Guide to Ad Fraud'. Published in December 2020, the guide expands on the above best practices to help drive media quality and effectiveness in the digital advertising industry.



BRAND SAFETY

Section 4: Brand Safety

As the complexity of finding and interacting with audiences increases due to the deprecation of the third-party cookie looming, the importance of holistic measurement and how we utilise data becomes paramount. A less-is-more approach to data, and creating clear baselines of what media quality and performance mean for each brand is key.

But in a fragmented ecosystem, creating a baseline and aligning it with broader business imperatives is easier said than done. A straightforward baseline of quality might be built around making sure ads appear at the right time and in the right place. Adding to that, they should reach the right audience, in a brand-safe, fraud-free, viewable and targeted environment.

In order to keep brand safety top of mind, standards laid out by the the 4A's Advertiser Protection Bureau (APB) [Brand Safety Floor and Brand Suitability Framework](#) that is also supported by the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (GARM) should be built upon as necessary, for any specific brands.

According to [DV's research](#), 69% of consumers value companies that are genuine and authentic, and as many as 49% would actively lobby against a brand or product if they saw it advertised next to inappropriate content. As brands are forced to make rapid decisions to respond to an endlessly evolving news cycle, many advertisers' initial reaction is to consider blocking news content wholesale or to use broad keywords to try to protect themselves against high-profile and negative topics. The result, however, is often a significant reduction in scale, as well as inadvertent negative repercussions for legitimate news publishers. This has advertisers moving beyond brand safety to brand suitability.

Once your brand safety strategy is updated, it's time to take the next step and embrace brand suitability. Go beyond safety by ensuring you reach consumers in the ideal environments for your brand.

Brand suitability involves contextual relevance, which is a developing consideration that goes deeper to assess whether the content on the page is relevant to the ads alongside it. builds on that with contextual avoidance categories that offer protection against specific content that is unsuitable for the brand, while still supporting trusted sites.

Taking a more nuanced approach to brand safety and suitability can help advertisers achieve coverage of high-performance content while having safeguards in place that align with specific brand values. This process includes creating a brand safety profile that establishes a strong floor of protection and builds on that with controls like inclusion/exclusion lists and avoidance categories that offer protection against specific content that is unsuitable for the brand, while still supporting trusted sites.

Not all brands will create the same blueprint. For example, a luxury sports car brand may not have the same approach to brand suitability as a fast-food restaurant brand. In order to achieve the right balance of coverage, brands should establish a clear understanding of their core brand values and of which topics or events may (or may not) fit into those values. Having firm answers to these questions will enable advertisers to effectively work with verification providers to leverage the proper tools to avoid unsuitable content while still maintaining scale.

With a clear baseline in place, organisations can begin benchmarking quality and performance based on data that translates across multiple markets, channels and partners. This enables them to align and compare performance on specific sites and apps, or individual campaigns, orientated around meaningful business outcomes, and customer experiences.

A good place to start is to review the [Content Taxonomy](#) created by IAB Tech Lab. The Content Taxonomy has evolved over time to provide publishers with a consistent and easy way to organise their website content. For example, to differentiate “sports” vs. “news” vs. “wellness” material. IAB Tech Lab’s Content Taxonomy specification provides additional utility aimed at minimising the risk that content categorization signals could be used to generate sensitive data points about things like race, politics, religion, or other personal characteristics that could result in discrimination. While the Content Taxonomy itself doesn’t constitute sensitive data – it simply categorises page content, and does not on its own reveal information about a user – there are few technical controls preventing taxonomy nodes being associated with individual IDs to build behavioural profiles over time based on content preferences.

The Content Taxonomy provides a “common language” that can be used when describing content. Typical uses of the content taxonomy are contextual targeting and brand safety. [The 3.0 version](#) of the content taxonomy includes updates to better support a variety of areas – News, Video/CTV content, Podcasts, Radio, Games and App stores.

Refining A Brand Safety Strategy

As content consumption and creation has boomed, so have the chances of inappropriate ad placements.

While brand safety is already familiar, the constantly evolving online landscape has pushed it back up the priority list. For marketers, that makes it vital to both understand industry benchmarks and find smarter ways to manage their ad adjacency accordingly. As brands seek to harness the vast potential for broader exposure and engagement, they'll also need a refined strategy for tackling multiple types of risk – ideally with real-time capabilities as emerging threats can evolve quickly.

The news cycle is constantly evolving - adding in new crises and issues that brands need to consider as part of their strategy - from elections to wars to entertainment controversies. Such topics can cause disruption across the digital media space and have a significant impact on online risk. There is a need to expand contextual technology to cover content beyond text, including images, video, and audio. With digital video ad spend projected to rise 17% this year to reach \$55.2 billion, it's more important than ever for brands to have a scalable solution for safety and suitability that can be applied across all media types. As we delve deeper into the artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML)-driven age, marketers have access to cutting-edge tools backed by AI/ML, that reveal largely unused insights by third-party adtech vendors across video, audio, and text content. Multimedia classification solutions that are able to classify video content - in the same way that is done for text on web pages today - hold the key to solving the impasse of transparency and brand safety for advertisers.

[Research from IAS](#) shows that in EMEA, for instance, experienced a 3.3% increase in desktop display advertising risk that drove total levels to 5.8% in H2 2020; the highest rate since 2017 — a year marked by national tragedy and high-profile brand safety incidents. The rise in brand risk was reflected in environments globally.

Consideration #1 - Tailoring your brand safety strategy

Brands invest a significant amount of time creating an image, cultivating consumer perception and fostering associations. Therefore, it's very important to ensure digital messages appear in suitable environments, not solely to avoid risk, but also to effectively reach the right consumers.

All brands are unique and their definition of safety and suitability is driven by their values and goals. Here are some tips on how to employ a multi-layered approach, with customisation and comprehensive protection:

Start with brand safety

1 - Set your base protection

To ensure your reputation is undamaged, determine your baseline protection. Start with your brand values, to determine your risk tolerance, then set your brand safety settings to balance campaign goals with the brand's risk tolerance. This brand risk generally involves specific types of content covered by standard content categories and site inclusions.

2.

2 - Risk calibration

After identifying risky topics, brands need to define what level of risk each of these have. Work with your verification provider that provides a more granular, holistic approach instead of a simple binary (on-off) brand safety solution. Advertisers generally agree on which categories are risky, but have a more granular control of your risk tolerance for each major content category. Consider the potential reduction in scale and missed opportunities from overly restrictive tactics to make the most of your campaigns.

3 - Understand the limitation of keywords

Keywords are effective at blocking content in real-time, but don't take into account whether the environment as a whole is actually right or wrong for your brand. They can also be very time consuming to maintain. As a result, blocking common or trending keywords has the potential to unnecessarily limit scale and harm publishers. A common misconception is that keyword exclusion lists are necessary to avoid risky content or trending negative topics. While it's important for brands to avoid unsafe content, most brand safety content categories already account for unsavoury environments. Additionally, context and intention can shift the meaning of even the most commonly blocked keywords.

4 - Advance to brand suitability

Once your brand safety strategy is updated, it's time to take the next step and embrace brand suitability.

Brand suitability is an approach that favours nuance and inclusivity media buying over blocking.

Going beyond safety will ensure you reach consumers in the ideal environments for your brand. Utilise a brand suitability technology that is able to review all elements on a given page and takes additional steps beyond URL analysis to understand the meaning of the content. Work with a partner that uses natural language processing (NLP) to evaluate language nuances and determine whether an environment is suitable for your brand.

5 - Unlock scale with contextual relevance

Language can be tricky to navigate in the digital world. Words can have multiple or related meanings, and different words or phrases can refer to the same thing. On top of that, language can express different sentiments or emotions depending on how it's written. That's why natural language processing is so important—it helps determine the meaning of the words on a page and anticipates how a human would interpret it.

6 - Understand sentiment and emotion analysis

Sentiment analysis uses Natural Language Processing to determine whether an article conveys a positive, neutral, or negative feeling to the person reading it. Emotion analysis is a deeper classification of sentiment. For example, humour or love are different types of positive emotion that can be detected by emotional analysis.

7 - Look beyond positive versus negative

It's important to remember that negative sentiment doesn't necessarily indicate that content is 'unsafe.' For example, a news article about an alarming stock market crash might have negative sentiment, but isn't categorically unsafe. Not to mention that it would be unrealistic for advertisers to avoid all content with negative sentiment. Instead, consider tailoring your message to different environments within your safety and suitability parameters.

8 - Set up content avoidance parameters

Work with an ad tech partner that provides pre-bid filtering and post bid blocking of content that falls outside your brand guidelines.

9 - Engage consumers with contextual targeting

Go beyond content avoidance and increase consumer engagement by targeting the environments that are contextually relevant to your brand or campaign.

10 - Navigate Brand safety with inclusive media buying

Most media buying strategies are built by blocking sites, pages, and keywords, which is inherently exclusive. Inclusive media buying aggregates content rather than eliminates it. Brands gain several benefits from inclusive media buying. First, they achieve better brand safety. Second, they support their inclusivity goals. Third, they achieve growth.

In practice, many brands still implement legacy brand safety techniques based on keyword exclusion approaches. Despite the push for change to utilise advanced contextual avoidance, many advertisers still block news sites and minority perspectives because of the risk of advertising against negative or politically charged content. For brands with DEI goals (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion), it is critical that they assess the inclusivity of their brand safety strategy, migrate to contextual avoidance and readjust to ensure that important and diverse content is included.

Consideration #2- Buying models

When approaching brand safety and suitability, buyers should consider that different inventory and buying models offer different levels of knowledge and control over the contextual environments where ads will be displayed.

There is a diminishing scale of insight when moving from single to aggregated inventory sources and from direct to indirect buying models. For example, consider a direct buy with a publisher who owns all content creation and exercises full editorial control and compare this to buying on the open exchange across several inventory aggregators, which include non-curated and user generator content.

For programmatic buys, pre-bid technology is utilised to minimise impression waste and to ensure that buyers do not bid on impressions that will eventually end up failing due to brand safety concerns. Pre-bid targeting segments are integrated within all major Demand Side Platforms (DSP), allowing brands to target only safe impressions before ever placing a bid.

Artificial intelligence is playing an increasingly important role in helping classify content at scale, especially when buying programmatically. AI enables us to move at the speed of content - which has jumped from sites producing dozens of articles per day, to thousands. By some estimates, AI will be responsible for 99% of all content developed by 2030. For brand safety, AI is a necessary tool to identify and classify content in multiple languages at scale rapidly. It also means being able to classify content that includes video, audio, images and text. When buying programmatically, leveraging such tools can make the difference between protection and problem.

Consideration #3 - Device types and environments

Brand risk is measured differently depending on the device and the environment. Display ads, for example, use the same measurement methodology on desktop as on mobile web with certain nuances considered. In-app ads however, are handled differently, while social media platforms require unique measurement solutions for their unique customer experiences.

1 - Mobile in-app

As consumers are spending more time on their mobile devices, in-app has become a key focus for campaign planning. With [eight in 10 mobile display ads](#) being traded programmatically, it is imperative that advertisers leverage targeting tools that are built specifically for mobile in-app environments.

Programmatic in-app environments – while slightly more brand safe than desktop environments – produce significant challenges for brands. This is mainly due to a lack of reporting and optimisation tools across the industry. That said, when in-app pre-bid targeting or automation is applied to programmatic environments, brands can virtually eliminate brand safety violations.

2 - Video

Video advertising is rapidly growing across all devices and for good reason: it continues to be the most impactful medium for reaching consumers. Despite witnessing growth across the board, video is still causing a challenge for advertisers in terms of measurement due to the mix of devices and environments used when video is consumed.

3 - Social

The proliferation of user-generated content and sharing of risky content on social media can pose a significant challenge for a brand. Understanding the content you want your brand to be aligned to is absolutely critical. No matter how sophisticated brand safety solutions become, you will need to understand what are the suitable environments and the audiences you want to target.

4 - CTV

Addressing brand safety in CTV today is still a nascent area and innovation in this space is imminent. Currently brand safety within CTV environments is most widely available at the app-level.

With app-level brand safety, brands can gain access to classifications of CTV apps and can use this information to determine if there are certain areas of CTV inventory that do not align to their brand safety requirements. App-level brand safety is not as sophisticated and can present a challenge to buyers with limiting scale.

The latest innovation in brand safety for CTV centres on channel and content-level brand safety. Where brands will be able to understand and define the CTV programmes that they want their advertising to appear alongside. This is critically important in CTV environments where there are a multitude of content aggregators and apps can host a plethora of content. In order to support the drive in this area of innovation, publishers should make content-level information available to their buyers to give them the ability to target contextually relevant ads on CTV.

Ad verification in CTV has been successful when providers work with publishers directly to gain access to content-level information and can validate that video ads are played to completion, and are fraud-free.

Brand Risk - best practices

Here are 10 easy-to-implement best practices that can help protect your brand's reputation when advertising online.

1. Determine brand value and campaign goals. Determine the risk tolerance and set brand suitability settings, balancing this with campaign goals.
2. Choose the right partners. Work with global digital verification partners that are integrated with all the major DSPs.
3. Prepare for a crisis by partnering with your communications team and verification partners to prevent this from happening. Create a plan in case the worst does happen.
4. Be honest with your partners and publishers – make your expectations clear from the start and keep an open dialogue throughout your partnership.
5. Reduce the reliance on legacy keyword-only strategies and consider contextual segments in their place. Migrate away from keyword-only strategies, both with the content verification provider and with the DSP. Rely on contextual segments in their place. Apply this approach at a post and pre-bid level in order to ensure brand suitability whilst minimising wasted budget on low quality impressions.
6. Consider buying models and apply the same pre-bid filter against both OMP and PMP buys. Private marketplaces (PMP) are a great opportunity once key partners have been established. However, it is crucial that advertisers don't lose sight of their brand suitability goals and ensure the quality of the media being passed via these curated marketplaces or PMPs meets their requirements for brand safety and suitability.
7. Keep track of industry benchmarks to ensure you're performing at your best.
8. Stay informed. Know your partners, their capabilities and how they can help you achieve your campaign goals.
9. Don't just set it and forget it. Keep your exclusion list and keyword lists up to date and review them quarterly.
10. Consider machine learning and AI. Partner with a verification vendor that uses robust, machine learning-based methodology for more accurate and scalable coverage



VIEWABILITY

Section 5: Viewability

Advertiser demand for viewable impressions has meant that viewable rates have risen steadily year-over-year. High viewable rates are now almost a given within a campaign — and certainly table stakes for advertisers. In fact, according to [DoubleVerify's 2023 Global Insights Report](#), overall video viewability reached 74%, enough to meet the IAB's recommended 70% target threshold for viewability. It was not long ago that viewability rates of 50% were the industry norm, but rates are on the rise. According to the [Integral Ad Science 2022 Media Quality Report](#), viewability averages stand above 75% across nearly all formats and environments worldwide. While this marks an impressive accomplishment, that range indicates that as much as one-quarter of digital ads are going unseen by consumers in certain environments. This viewability gap creates challenges for both the buy and sell-sides of the digital media business.

But just as the Internet can never be completely brand safe or free of fraud, all ads cannot be viewable. From page timeouts to a user scrolling too quickly, there are a number of reasons why some ads don't have the opportunity to be seen, which is why measuring viewability remains critical. And it is particularly challenging to measure viewability on video impressions. Ads that are not seen or heard are essentially wasted media for the advertiser.

Viewability best practices

Marketers often talk about reaching the right consumers, in the right places, in the appropriate context. But first, marketers should ensure their ads have the opportunity to be viewable and to make a lasting impact. After all, advertising can't be effective without first being seen.

Here are a few recommended best practices when it comes to viewability:

- Follow industry standards for viewability
- Leverage IVT detection and prevention, as well as blocking technology, so that you're only sending ads to real people – and paying for safe, viewable impressions
- Leverage predictive targeting for viewability
- Reallocate spend to formats that are performing better during your campaigns
- Look out for new ad formats that may result from publishers trying to optimise their site
- Ensure cross-platform, cross-device and cross-browser viewability measurement using geometric methodology
- Work with MRC-accredited verification providers for both display and video viewability
- Make sure the verification provider can support custom measurement based on brand needs
- Advocate for OMID adoption, eliminating the need for multiple vendor integrations and facilitating third-party verification measurement for ads served to mobile app environments
- Look beyond standard viewability metrics toward attention metrics like exposure and engagement to help drive performance

Section 6: In-Geo

Like other components of quality, ads seen outside the intended geography are wasted on consumers who are unlikely to relate to the messaging. For example, a local Edinburgh auto dealer ad, with specific messaging for the region, that shows up on a user's CTV app in London is essentially a wasted opportunity to engage a relevant consumer.

Advertisers should work with verification providers that ensure international geo-targeting by country and region.





CREATIVE EXECUTION AND USER EXPERIENCE

Section 7: Creative Execution and User Experience

7.1 What makes a good creative for consumers?

1. Shoot for the Brain - or the proverbial Heart, which requires a Brain

Helping to fund quality journalism, advertising enables consumers to have the right to information and free choice in modern economies, as it feeds most of our free and democratic access to news, knowledge and information. This value exchange should not be abused and instead, is treasured by the majority of brands who want to build meaningful relationships with their target audiences. Consumers should therefore not be subjected to shoddy or inappropriate advertisements. Advertising should not be manipulated, advertising should not be easy puns, advertising should never be blatant hard selling, advertising should not be a collection of 'lifestyle', 'aspirational' imagery/sounds cobbled together in the hope that the so-called *stupid masses* follow your brand, your service or your product.

As David Ogilvy so aptly put it, back in the 1960's, "The consumer is not a moron, she's your wife". Read your partner, your father, your best friend. It still holds true and, hopefully, it will always hold true, lest we become a society of blind followers of the latest social media trend - or *trender*, or pseudo-political figure, for that matter.

So speak to your audience's brain (and/or a proverbial heart, which requires a brain). Is it harder? Yes, but it pays in the end, for a lot longer. Once the ones with a brain (and/or a proverbial heart, which requires a brain) opt for your brand or message, they will know why, they will stick to their decision, they will follow their emotions and they will go through the trouble of spreading your good word.

2. Inform, Amaze or Move - but always Tell a Story

This really is so simple that it becomes amazing itself why it is not followed consistently. For countless millennia, humankind has gathered around 'the campfire' - in whatever form, shape or electronic channel it took along the years - to listen to stories. Does anybody really believe we, as a species, have changed over the tiny blink of the last one hundred years? Really?

Your story may be **informative** - telling people what they didn't know - as long as it is true, never, ever, forget that, or you'll be met with the unpleasant surprise of finding out that the fastest way to kill a bad product or service is to give it a grand advertising campaign.

Your story may be **amazing** - telling people something they did not know in such a way that their jaws drop to the floor. Again, truth and honesty should be a golden rule. If your service/product is *not* amazing, maybe the people using it are, or maybe *the way* they use it is, or maybe even *the story of the brand* is. Do you know why jeans are called 'jeans'? Look it up, it has to do with Italian sailors. Do you know where the term 'Denim' comes from? Again, search it - it is related to a French port of sailing. Orr Young, founder of Young & Rubicam, wrote almost 100 years ago that "there are no boring products, only boring copywriters". If you're in doubt about what he was talking about, find the one-page print ad he wrote about a steel nail, and I rest my case.

Your story may simply be **funny** (but really, it has to be really funny, no easy puns) or it may simply be **moving**. Eat, Pray, (Laugh), Love. When you consider that the human species is the only one on the planet that will go out of its way to eat expertly cut raw fish - something any respectable bear would simply gobble up with no further ado - these four activities are so inherently human that we should often employ them in communicating with said species.

In digital video advertising, is it really hard to tell a story in the 5 seconds it takes to "Skip ads"? Yes, it is - it's nearly impossible to tell a story in 5". But if you have a good story and manage to *tease-it-in* properly in those 5 seconds people tend to skip the skip. Unfortunately, it often happens that digital video ads are mere adaptations of TV executions, so the storyline was just not devised thinking of the first 5 seconds, but rather of the last 5. Good digital video advertising simply needs to address this.

So even if the human being is by nature homo sapiens so tempted to save his energy, digital ads should not be a copy of traditional TV ads.

In summary, if your creative piece is able to draw a few drops of instant saliva, a fervent bead of adoring sweat, a couple of tears from a hearty laugh or two degrees of unexpected warming in the pectoral region of your target group, you have done your job well.

3. If you don't love Advertising, quit your job. Now.

Good creativity is incompatible with ignorance and laziness. It takes a lot of research and work to mine the *interesting*, the *unknown*, the *amazing*, the *moving* or the *funny* nuggets you can use from the often garbled sludge that most of today's briefing docs (if there even is one) seem to produce. But it is always worth the trouble. People view it or read it. People share it. People often shed a tear, or share a laugh, or re-post it or even (outlandishly) buy what you are trying to sell!

4. Great creative executions are useless if you can't deliver them properly

Think about something you ordered from Amazon - or any other ecommerce platform or outlet, for that matter. You wanted it, you chose it, you paid for it and, admit it, you're secretly yearning for the sound of that doorbell on the expected date. And then the bell doesn't ring, on that date or any other. Instead, you get an email saying that "a delivery attempt was made", and you have to trek or drive down to the nearest collection point - right across town, through maddening traffic - to get your package. Sound familiar? Does it not ruin at least half of the experience?

Now imagine that you didn't want it, you most often have not chosen it, you paid for it with your precious time, and it is inconveniencing you by delaying what you'd really like right now. That's digital advertising, when it's poorly delivered.

You may have the greatest advertising campaign on earth; if it is not delivered properly to the media outlet your consumer is using, it will most probably backfire. User experience is now the motherlode of any successful campaign. [The Coalition for Better Ads](#) is a worldwide initiative that directly addresses this issue.

7.2 User Experience

Many campaigns have outstanding creative ideas and amazing content, yet they fail. Assuming they were well targeted, this is usually because they were not delivered properly to the consumer. It's not the content, it's the shape and form - the body as the delivery mechanism. And this conundrum is at the very roots of the Coalition for Better Ads.

Advertising helps support valuable free content, robust journalism and social connections across the internet. Consumers, however, are increasingly frustrated with ads that disrupt their experience, interrupt content and slow browsing.

Leading international trade associations and companies involved in online media formed the [Coalition for Better Ads](#) to improve consumers' experience with online advertising. The Coalition for Better Ads has leveraged consumer insights and cross-industry expertise to develop and implement new global standards, the [Better Ad Standards](#), for online advertising that address consumer expectations.

Establishing Global Standards for Digital Advertising was always the ultimate goal of the Coalition. In order to achieve this, massive and groundbreaking research was conducted using Consumer-centric methodologies. The research goal was to measure consumers' preferences about the types of ads they least prefer, in order to help the global marketplace take steps to deliver a better ad experience.

In the first phase of the Coalition's research, more than 25,000 Internet users in North America and Europe were surveyed about their preferences for different types of online ads. The research included desktop web (55 ad experiences) and mobile web (49 ad experiences). The results of the Coalition's consumer-focused research defined [Better Ads Standards](#) that identify the ad experiences that fall beneath a threshold of consumer acceptability. Better Ads Standards revealed the least preferred, most annoying ad experiences that are also most likely to cause consumers to adopt ad blockers.

The research methodology was then used to measure consumers' preferences in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The research found strong alignment of consumer preferences across countries and regions for the most- and least-preferred online ad experiences, supporting the adoption of the same Better Ads Standards for desktop and mobile web globally. To date, more than 66,000 consumers in countries representing 70% of global online advertising spending have participated in the Coalition's research for desktop and mobile web. The [research process itself is worth looking into here](#).

The Coalition plans to continue its research and test other digital advertising environments beyond desktop, mobile web, and short-form video. The [Better Ads Standards](#) as they stand should be a clear and present source of verification for both creative and production teams as they shape creative executions.

Section 8: Privacy & Consent – TCF

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force on 25 May 2018, revolutionised the data privacy landscape in Europe. GDPR was designed to harmonise data privacy laws across Europe, giving individuals greater control and transparency over their personal data while raising the bar for businesses to achieve lawful processing of personal information.

The IAB Europe Transparency and Consent Framework (TCF) is the only GDPR consent solution built *by* the industry *for* the industry, creating a true industry-standard approach. The TCF's simple objective is to help all parties in the digital advertising chain to facilitate the compliance with the GDPR and ePrivacy Directive when processing personal data or accessing and/or storing information on a user's device, such as cookies, advertising identifiers, device identifiers and other tracking technologies.

The TCF creates an environment where publishers can tell visitors what data is being collected and how their digital property and the companies they partner with intend to use it. The TCF gives the publishing and advertising industries a common language with which to communicate consumer consent for the delivery of relevant online advertising and content.

On 25 April 2018 the IAB Europe Transparency and Consent Framework v1.1 was launched after an extensive industry consultation with IAB Europe and IAB Tech Lab members and the broader digital advertising industry.

On 21 August 2019 a revised version of the TCF, TCF v2.0 was launched following extensive industry consultation particularly with publishers and the industry associations who represent all aspects of the industry. On the 15th August, TCF v1.1 was deprecated and all stakeholders switched TCF v2.0.

On May 16th 2023, the latest revision of the TCF, TCF v2.2 was launched to accommodate further evolution. All details of the changes can be found [here](#) [>>](#)

The benefits of the TCF for users

Under the TCF, not only can the user give or withhold consent, but they can also exercise their 'right to object' to data being processed on the basis of legitimate interests. It also enables greater transparency for the user, through more detailed and more easily understandable user- friendly descriptions of the data processing purposes and information about vendors provided in the CMP UI..

Specifically, TCF v2.2 supports

- Transparency- the information provided to end-users has been improved: the purposes and features' names and descriptions have changed. The legal text has been removed and replaced by user-friendly descriptions - supplemented by examples of real-use cases (illustrations) as well as the requirement to disclose in the initial layer the number of third-party vendors that are seeking consent or pursue data processing purposes on the basis of their legitimate interests has been added.
- Informed choice - vendors are required to provide additional information about their data processing operations such as categories of data collected or retention periods on a per-purpose basis - so that this information can in turn be disclosed to end-users
- Accountability - vendors who rely on legitimate interest for certain purposes must declare what their legitimate interests at stake are, by providing at the registration level a dedicated URL where with this information can be found (e.g. a bookmark of their existing privacy policy), it is only allowed to use legitimate interest as a legal basis for purpose 2, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 that are not related to advertising & content personalisation.
- Control - publishers and their CMPs are required to ensure that users can re-access the CMP UI easily to manage their choices (e.g. from a floating icon or a footer link available on each webpage, or from the top-level setting of the app)
- Compliance - IAB Europe has developed Compliance Programmes to verify compliance of TCF Participants with the Policies and Technical Specifications; all auditing mechanisms and verifications susceptible to be performed are described in [Control Catalogue](#), to help TCF participants in assessing and reviewing the compliance of their TCF implementations.

Supporting the TCF

With many of the largest Vendors and CMPs in programmatic advertising, including Adobe, Axel Springer, Criteo, Google, GroupM, Integral Ad Science, Oracle Data Cloud, OneTrust Preference Choices, The Trade Desk, Quantcast, Xandr, and more working with the TCF v2.2, IAB Europe encouraged interested stakeholders to find out more about the TCF and how they can implement the framework.

Vendors who wish to join the IAB Europe Transparency and Consent Framework need to register at the GVL Portal. Once an application is received and approved by IAB Europe, vendors will be issued with an ID and will be listed on the [Global Vendor List](#) (GVL). The registration process for vendors requires adherence to TCF [Policy](#) v2.2 and to the [TCF Terms & Conditions](#).

CMPs must also register to participate in the Framework and can do this by applying for an annual CMP membership with the TCF through completing the CMP application process at the CMP Portal (CMP Registration). Once they have completed and passed the CMP Validation test managed by IAB Europe, they will receive an ID and will be listed [here](#).

Publishers can use the GVL to view the vendors who are participating in the TCF, and to determine which vendors to include in the transparency and consent user interface they make available on their website. In order to support the publishers in the selection process, there is also [an additional vendor list](#) that is not intended for user disclosures but can be used by publishers to, for example, avoid requesting user's consent for vendors that operate in technical environments and jurisdictions that are not relevant to their online services, as well as generally better understand each TCF Vendor's scope of operations and whether it transfers data outside of the EEA

Publishers can also see a list on the IAB Europe website of CMPs who are approved to participate in the TCF. Publishers can then either select a CMP from the list that they would like to work with or publishers can register as a CMP themselves and build their own CMP protocol. Find out more [here](#).

Section 9: Sustainability

Brands may be incentivized to consider sustainability as a factor in their advertising strategy due to the importance of environmental impact mitigation to consumers and corporate commitments to ESG goals. However, the execution of a “sustainable” advertising campaign, made so through inventory selection, creative execution, or other means, is associated with brand risk as advertisers may be accused of greenwashing.

Greenwashing may be defined as the *perpetuation of unsubstantiated or misleading claims in relation to an advertiser or product’s environmental impact*. Simultaneously, advertisers must be careful to avoid **greenhushing**, defined as the phenomenon of *corporations avoiding the issue of environmental sustainability to evade scrutiny*. Considering the risk associated with both improper execution and inaction, it could be argued that a digital advertising strategy that minimises risk for brands should feature some level of meaningful action related to environmental sustainability.

Several national IABs have been working on how to reduce ads carbon footprints at their level. They have set up several initiatives to quantify the footprint and proposed tools and best practices aiming at reducing their environmental impact. Some advertisers are now starting to include these criteria when selecting media agencies.

1.

Sustainability messaging in creative execution

Best practices related to sustainability messaging:

- **Opt for reduction targets rather than net zero targets.** These may be set through the Science-Based Targets initiative, for example. **Net zero** emissions targets may encounter higher degrees of scepticism as strategies for their achievement usually rely on **carbon offsetting** when emissions cannot be fully avoided.
- **Carbon offsets** are purchasable tokens that represent positive environmental impact through subsidisation of projects with carbon-negative impact. They are meant to be employed once a firm has exhausted possible reduction actions to balance out its remaining emissions total. However, their use has also been scrutinised heavily due to a number of reports highlighting fraud and ineffectiveness in carbon offset markets.

- Carbon offsets may be utilised as intended if the following conditions hold:
 - The firm has already taken action to reduce its environmental impact and is only using offsets for the rest of its emission total, which cannot be reduced further.
 - The firm has performed its due diligence in ensuring that:
 - Environmental impact associated with the projects it is funding has been properly accounted for.
 - These projects are **marginal**, i.e. would not exist in the absence of funding through carbon offsetting.
 - These projects do not **negatively impact local communities**.
- Additionally, the firm should preferably fund projects that are associated with emissions **sequestration** rather than emissions **avoidance**, as the former is substantially more impactful in terms of global warming.
- Finally in relation to offsetting, firms should be aware that according to the Science-Based Targets initiative, carbon offsets (also referred to as credits) should not be accounted for as reductions in connection to near-term reduction targets.
- Digital advertising stakeholders should also be mindful of regulatory proposals that impact consumer-facing claims on the environmental performance of traders and/or products, such as the Green Claims Directive. The Green Claims Directive, if passed, would set new standards for environmental claims and significantly impact creative execution related to sustainability.
- Digital advertising stakeholders should be careful when employing language such as “green”, “sustainable”, and “environmentally friendly” in creative execution, as these terms are often poorly defined and may lead to accusations of misleading consumers. When used, these terms should be accompanied by descriptions that specify their meaning and references to the actions that substantiate the relevant claims.

Section 10: Best Practices for The Industry

For Media Buyers

- Ensure you're only purchasing app(ads.txt) compliant inventory. Work with DSPs and SSPs that discard unauthorised inventory.
- Understand who is getting paid for an impression: leverage industry tools such as sellers.json and the openRTB supply-chain object to understand exactly who is getting paid or selling impressions. When doing this, make sure there are not any unknown entities, entities you're not comfortable with, or entities that are not creating value in your marketing strategy. If a partner doesn't support sellers.json and/or supply-chain object, be cautious and block if you're not 100% confident in what you're getting.
- Ensure each impression is pre-scanned for invalid / fraudulent traffic to ensure all IVT is removed from being purchased.
- Ensure your partners have controls in place to ensure ads are only placed on brand-safe content, are eliminating malware, not funding piracy, can monitor and have processes in place to account for any spoofing of inventory and comply with all local laws and regulations.
- Ensure your partners have a team dedicated to inventory quality. MRC accredited vendors provide a critical baseline level of protection, but for best results look for layered defences that include specialised expertise from the partners you work with. There are some that require the human eye or the common sense approach to investigate further when something just looks too good to be true.
- Targeting and capping.

For Media Sellers

- Implement app(ads.txt) files and only list partners where you can directly trace revenue from. Adding a company to your ads.txt is like handing someone the keys to your house - do not blindly add lines without knowing who they are. You can also cross-reference app(ads.txt) files with sellers.json information to understand exactly who is in the files.
- Please refer to IAB Tech Lab standards [here](#) for best practices.

- Ensure your media buyers are trustworthy and not reselling your inventory at a mark-up or mixing direct inventory with spoofed inventory to create scale and higher revenue. This can be done by working with DSPs or SSPs to understand if anyone is selling inventory you own.
- Have the consumer experience in mind, meaning do not overload pages/apps with ad units, ensure ad units have a decent chance of being viewed, do not refresh ads at an alarming rate, and ensure you're properly representing inventory as it truly is (i.e. don't say an outstream ad is in-stream, don't spoof the app/site, etc.).

A few general best practices below ensure the industry not only maintains but builds upon industry benchmarks:

- Ensure a baseline of media quality — impressions delivered are brand safe/brand suitable, fraud free and viewable in the intended geography -- and enforce that standard across all brands, campaigns and regions.
- Utilise an accredited third-party vendor to measure media quality across platforms, devices and browsers.
- Ensure verification vendor provides brand suitability controls in accordance with the 4A's APB and GARM.
- Ensure an expanded support model to enable regionalised decision making with centralised transparency.
- In programmatic environments, employ a two-pronged approach to ensure you're bidding on and investing in the highest quality media. This includes:
 - Pre-bid targeting / avoidance
 - Post-bid monitoring & blocking

Section 11: Industry Standards

The following section details other organisations which have initiatives to enable responsibility and quality in digital advertising.

Media Rating Council (MRC)

The Media Rating Council objectives are:

- To secure for the media industry and related users audience measurement services that are valid, reliable and effective.
- To evolve and determine minimum disclosure and ethical criteria for media audience measurement services.
- To provide and administer an audit system designed to inform users as to whether such audience measurements are conducted in conformance with the criteria and procedures developed.

Most relevant to the quality of digital advertising, are its audits in the areas of viewability and ad fraud.

Find out more [here](#).

GARM Framework by WFA

GARM is the Global Alliance for Responsible Media, a cross-industry initiative established by the World Federation of Advertisers to address the challenge of harmful content on digital media platforms and its monetization via advertising.

The GARM Brand Safety Floor + Suitability Framework is set out to provide advertising industry participants with a common structure for evaluating the brand safety and suitability of an ad placement relative to an ad's position to nearby content. The framework set out an agreed set of sensitive content categories with different risk levels, each with monetization guidelines that range from content that is not suitable for advertising (The Brand Safety Floor) to content that is suitable to be eligible for monetization but may present varying degrees of sensitivity to the advertiser (The Suitability Framework).

Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG)

Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) is a US based cross-industry accountability program to create transparency in the business relationships and transactions that undergird the digital ad industry, while continuing to enable innovation. A joint marketing-media industry program, TAG was created with a focus on four core areas: eliminating fraudulent digital advertising traffic, combating malware, fighting ad-supported Internet piracy to promote brand integrity, and promoting brand safety through greater transparency. TAG was created by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's), Association of National Advertisers (ANA), and Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and works collaboratively with companies throughout the digital ad supply chain.

4 core areas of work are:

- Eliminate Fraudulent Traffic
- Combat Malware
- Fight Internet Piracy
- Promote Transparency

Find out more [here](#).

WIPO Alert

The WIPO Alert Database is a secure online platform on which national authorities can upload and update their lists of copyright-infringing websites. Advertisers and advertising agencies can download these lists via an API as an aggregated feed. The service enables a global view of infringing sites, including sites in foreign languages which might otherwise be overlooked.

Access to the database will be controlled by WIPO and open to any genuine advertiser or agency which is willing to undertake to use the information solely for preventing the appearance of advertising on pirate websites. There is no charge for the service.

Find out more [here](#).

Memorandum of Understanding on online advertising and IPR

The MoU on online advertising and IPR is a voluntary agreement facilitated by the European Commission to limit advertising on websites and mobile applications that infringe copyright or disseminate counterfeit goods.

The MoU is a part of the Commission's 'follow the money' approach to IPR enforcement (see below). The signatories of this MoU commit to minimise the placement of advertising on websites and mobile applications that infringe copyright or disseminate counterfeit goods. This will help to curtail the revenues of these websites and apps. The signatories will work with the Commission to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the MoU on the online advertising market. The MoU, which complements similar national initiatives, will be assessed after a year, during which the signatories will meet quarterly to analyse the progress achieved.

Find out more [here](#).

Code of Practice on Disinformation

The self-regulatory Code of Practice on Disinformation is to address the spread of online disinformation and fake news.

This is the first time worldwide that industry agrees, on a voluntary basis, to self-regulatory standards to fight disinformation. The Code aims at achieving the objectives set out by the Commission's Communication presented in April 2018 by setting a wide range of commitments, from transparency in political advertising to the closure of fake accounts and demonetization of purveyors of disinformation.

The Code includes an annex identifying best practices that signatories will apply to implement the Code's commitments.

Find out more [here](#).

Coalition for Better Ads (CBA)

The Coalition for Better Ads leverages consumer insights and cross-industry expertise to develop and implement new global standards, the Better Ad Standards, for online advertising that address consumer expectations. Currently, the Standards are applicable in the Desktop and Mobile Web environments.

Find out more [here](#).



Section 12: Industry Quality Initiatives Across Europe

One of the key objectives of IAB Europe and any National IAB is to build a sustainable future for digital advertising and marketing. This can be achieved by creating standards and frameworks to provide a set of principles and rules to encourage responsibility and quality in digital advertising. Over the last few years there has been a surge of industry challenges from ad fraud to unsafe brand environments which has threatened the quality of digital advertising campaigns.

[IAB Europe's Quality Initiative's Navigator](#) (updated in February 2023) highlights the work being undertaken by National IABs in Europe to enable digital advertising to be delivered responsibly and to the highest quality. The navigator provides a summary of the national level quality certification schemes plus any other guidelines or best practice guides that exist.

Suzanne McElligott, CEO, IAB Ireland and Board Member of IAB Europe comments: "Great work has been achieved across national IABs in some of the larger markets to develop local quality certification schemes. As a consequence, there is now a great opportunity for IAB Europe to develop a framework based on these schemes and so assist all (of the other) European markets to learn from the programmes in place and to develop their own national IAB quality scheme."



Section 13: IAB Europe Resources

The following section details relevant IAB Europe initiatives and resources designed to ensure a sustainable future for digital advertising and marketing in Europe.

Viewability Principles

These European Viewability Principles created by the European Viewability Steering Group aim to help our industry to achieve the following macro goals:

- 1.To raise minimum quality standards in digital advertising measurement for all stakeholders across Europe.
- 2.To measure digital ad exposure which is deemed a key step to increasing confidence in digital ad trading.
- 3.To enhance the (internet) user experience in the context of changing user expectations.
- 4.To improve confidence in the digital ad environment.

Find out more [here](#).

Supply Chain Transparency Guide

The aim of the [IAB Europe Supply Chain Transparency Guide](#) is to improve transparency in the digital advertising supply chain in the areas of data, cost and inventory source. The guide provides questions for each stakeholder category to be asked at different stages of the supply chain. First launched in 2018, the Guide is updated on a regular basis by IAB Europe's Programmatic Trading Committee.

Access the fourth version (March 2021) of the interactive version of the guide [here](#) or download the PDF version [here](#). Read more about the release of the latest version in our blog post [here](#).

Quality blog series

In this blog series, IAB Europe's Brand Advertising Committee and its members explore key perspectives and the latest developments in the drive for a viewable, quality digital advertising environment. The blogs are:

- [What does viewability mean for a mobile world?](#) - Alex North, Facebook
- [What is quality media and why is it important?](#) - Stevan Randjelovic, GroupM
- [How Open Measurement Unlocks Scale](#) - Nick Morley, Integral Ad Science

IAB Europe Guide to Brand Safety & Brand Suitability

- In July 2020, IAB Europe launched this Guide to share background context on brand safety in Europe, pan-European definitions for brand safety and brand suitability with accompanying key considerations, best practices and case studies to help educate all stakeholders on ensuring brand safe environments.
- With the introduction of brand suitability in the last couple of years, the guide also provides an overview of how this can complement and enhance brand safety tools to ensure a more relevant content environment for brands.
- Access the guide [here](#)

IAB Europe's Guide to Ad Fraud

- In December 2020, IAB Europe released its 'Guide to Ad Fraud', to help drive media quality and effectiveness in the digital advertising industry.
- It defines specific types of fraud in digital advertising and outlines how verification companies work to combat new and emerging types of ad fraud across all channels.
- It also provides top tips for buyers and planners to prevent Ad Fraud in their next campaigns and serves as a call for action to the industry to follow best practices to tackle ad fraud.
- Access the guide [here](#)

GDPR Guidance: Legitimate Interests Assessments (LIA) for Digital Advertising

- IAB Europe works to produce relevant guidance on the implementation of EU privacy and data protection rules applicable in the digital advertising sector.
- In March 2021, our Legal Committee developed this practical GDPR Guide on legitimate interests assessments (LIAs) in collaboration with IAB UK.
- Access the guide [here](#)

Section 14: Summary

Quality is something that all stakeholders have to strive for. Every player within the supply chain is accountable and responsible for the reputation of digital advertising.

As summarised in this Guide, there are various components to quality, and the priority of these will vary depending on the advertiser; viewability, brand safety and suitability, ad fraud, campaign creativity and in-geo. This Guide provides practical advice for each of these areas.

In summary, it is important that before thinking about specific performance KPIs, brands create a baseline of quality. This includes developing a strategy – like establishing viewability baselines, brand suitable categories or in-geo parameters, operationalising them through campaign execution and making necessary optimisation adjustments. Once this baseline is created, brands can be assured they're delivering campaigns that have the quality to resonate well with audiences and deliver on their KPIs. For publishers, quality is just as important since it is a key differentiator in an increasingly commoditised market.

Company standards, industry initiatives, collaboration, testing and learning is key to continuing to uphold quality within our industry.



Section 15: Case Studies

IAS's measurement and optimisation solutions drives programmatic performance for Toyota

Background:

Global automotive leader Toyota and its partners, The&Partnership and Xaxis, wanted to enhance Toyota's programmatic performance, maximise campaign impact. Supported by Integral Ad Science (IAS), The&Partnership and Xaxis aimed to enhance Toyota's performance, drive better results, and provide actionable insights across their campaigns. The&Partnership and Xaxis's goal was to better understand the impact and correlation of IAS's Media Quality solutions with Toyota's quality of inventory on metrics like completed car configurator and brochure downloads.

Solution:

The client utilised IAS's measurement and optimization solutions to

- Verify Media Quality against IAS's standard Brand Safety, IVT, and Viewability metrics
- Quantify Media Cost and understand the financial impact of blocked ads and the cost of quality inventory all in one place
- Optimise Media Efficiency and implement custom segments via IAS Context Control to drive better performance & identify right audiences.

Results:

- **29% decrease in cost per session compared to alternative targeting solution**
- **22% decrease in cost per action compared to alternative targeting solution**
- **1.8x increase in conversation rate compared to alternative targeting solution**

By leveraging IAS metrics and The&Partnership and Xaxis's partner strategy, Toyota witnessed significant lift in overall campaign performance. The combined partnership has demonstrated how the increase in quality inventory impacts Toyota's main KPIs.

Toyota was able to understand that in-view impressions are a key driver for conversion rate. Driving successful cost savings correlated to higher campaign conversion rates and overall efficiencies.

IAS Total Visibility and Viewability measurement proved the value of Toyota's data performance against their average KPIs. IAS optimizations aided The&Partnership and Xaxis to increase the quality of the inventory, and, at the same time, achieve strong performance results for Toyota.

Download the case study [here](#)

DoubleVerify's CTV Viewability Measurement Solution Revealed Exceptionally High Viewability Rates on Samsung TV Plus

Background:

Samsung Ads Europe, the advertising division of Samsung Electronics, wanted to validate their media quality with viewability measurement on Samsung TV Plus. Viewability is not always a guarantee within CTV environments. In fact, DV found that more than one in three impressions serve into environments that may fire ads when the TV is turned off, creating the risk of wasted ad spend. That's why when DV launched the industry's first scaled viewability measurement solution, Samsung Ads Europe wanted to be among the first publishers to use our solution to verify the viewability of their inventory.

Solution:

DV's CTV viewability measurement solution offers publishers and advertisers exclusive access to direct viewability measurement on CTV at scale. The solution leverages the power of DV's MRC-accredited Fully On-Screen certification and quartile measurement metrics. This addresses the unique challenges in CTV verification — including a TV being turned off when an ad fires — and allows publishers and advertisers to achieve viewability measurement parity, using the same metrics across devices.

Result:

Samsung's free, ad-supported streaming TV (FAST) and video-on-demand service achieved a 92 percent viewability rate, 48 percent higher than DV's CTV viewability average. These results exemplify the high-quality and premium ad solution offered by Samsung on its FAST service.

- 92% Viewability Rate
- 48% above average

Download the case study [here](#)

DV Authentic Brand Suitability Increased Media Savings and Drove Campaign Performance for Michelin France and Havas International

Background:

Michelin France, in collaboration with their agency HAVAS International, wanted to reduce high post-bid block rates to create media value recovery across their programmatic video investment. Although Michelin was protected from serving their ads alongside this potentially brand damaging content via DV blocking tags, the block rates exceeded the benchmarks set by the brand and the agency, and were still above the average expected for auto advertisers. Therefore, they wanted an automated pre-bid solution that enabled them to avoid bidding on ads against this type of content in the first place. In addition, they were seeking a way to create operational efficiencies when applying brand safety and suitability profiles across new Open Marketplace (OMP) and Private Marketplace (PMP) line items, or for testing new inventory pools and supply sources.

Solution:

DV recommended Authentic Brand Suitability (ABS) targeting, which enabled Michelin's agency partner Havas International to create a centralised set of brand safety controls. Deployed across programmatic campaigns and buying platforms, ABS perfectly aligns pre-bid avoidance with post-bid measurement and blocking, helping advertisers significantly lower block rates, streamline operations and increase performance.

Results:

After activating ABS, Michelin France saw their block rate immediately drop by 98%. To ensure ABS was running at peak efficiency, Havas tweaked the ABS controls and removed a number of campaign restrictions that were no longer required from the DSP setup in order to re-open scale with consistently reduced block-rates. For the rest of the campaign's duration, the block rate remained steadily under 1%. The reduction in blocks equated to a media savings of 11%.

Michelin also noted that the increase in quality drove higher media performance. Their Authentic* video viewable rate grew by 13 percentage points (pp) and their click-through rate increased by 20% after activating ABS. The quality and performance improvements were compelling on their own, but Michelin France and Havas found that a significant portion of ABS's value was the control, security and operational efficiency that it provided. As long as a single segment for ABS is used, they know they are protected. This enabled them to establish a centralised standard and drive consistency and alignment across local markets, campaigns and programmatic platforms.

- 98% decrease in block rate
- 11% estimated media savings
- 20% higher CTR
- 13pp increase in Authentic Video Viewable Rate

Download the case study [here](#)

The Ultimate Guide to CTV Measurement

DoubleVerify's (DV) mission is to make the advertising ecosystem stronger, safer and more secure. And as part of that effort, DV is dedicated to empowering advertisers to measure and protect their investments on Connected TV (CTV).

In this guide, we discuss:

- How media quality challenges can arise on CTV
- The difference between CTV vs. Over-the-Top (OTT)
- The benefits of advertising on CTV
- The global state of CTV
- The importance of verification on CTV
- How to measure and protect OTT and CTV quality
- How to make the most impact from your ad spend by increasing measurement and protection on CTV campaigns

Download the guide [here](#)

DoubleVerify Identifies BeatSting, the First Large-Scale Ad Impression Fraud Scheme to Hit Audio

The DV Fraud Lab has identified, and shut down, the first large-scale ad impression fraud scheme in audio, BeatSting. As digital audio spend has been steadily increasing, fraudsters are targeting audio inventory in their latest attempt to evade detection. DV estimates that Beatsting alone has cost unprotected advertisers up to \$1 million per month. Download the full report to learn more about how the fraud scheme works, how DV was able to detect it and how DV has been protecting clients from this and similar schemes over the years.

REPORT: [DoubleVerify's 2023 Global Insights Report](#)

DoubleVerify's 2023 Global Insights Report examines media quality and performance trends from over 1,000 customers in nearly 100 countries. Our comprehensive report covers:

- The state of media quality across fraud, viewability and brand suitability – including regional highlights
- What it looks like when you leave your campaigns unprotected
- The case for “always-on” verification
- A closer look into media quality on CTV, gaming, retail media and audio
- The role of attention metrics in shaping optimization efforts and – ultimately – campaign performance

Download the report [here](#)

Contributors

IAB Europe would like to thank the following contributors who helped to author this Guide:



Filippo Benizio, Team Lead, Account Management at DoubleVerify
Lyndon MacArthur, Marketing Manager DoubleVerify
Felicity Dudley, Director of Marketing EMEA, DoubleVerify



Emmanuel Josserand, Sr Dir. Brand, Agency and Industry Relations, FreeWheel



Stevan Randjelovic, Director, Brand Safety and Digital Risk, EMEA at GroupM



Pierre Gauthier, ExCo and Head of International, IAB France
Jacques Cazin, IAB VC Brand Advertising Committee, Viznet



Luis Marinho-Falcão, Head of Operations, IAB Portugal

Contributors

IAB Europe would like to thank the following contributors who helped to author this Guide:



Akshay Bhattacharjee, Senior Programmatic Solutions Specialist

Livia Shlesman, Marketing Director, IAS

Paul Nasse, RVP, Agency Partnerships EMEA, IAS



Nick Frizzell, Vice President, Marketplace Quality, Magnite



Moran Shwartz, Principal Technical Product Manager, Oracle Advertising



Maria Shcheglakova, EMEA Marketing Director, PubMatic

Eric Bozinny, Senior Director, Marketplace Quality, PubMatic



Dennis Soebagio, Market Quality Specialist, Smaato/Verve Group



Silvia Gorra, VP Marketing, VidMob

Helen Mussard

Chief Marketing Officer

mussard@iab europe.eu

iab europe
Rond-Point Robert
Schumanplein 11
1040 Brussels
Belgium

 [@iabeurope](https://twitter.com/iabeurope)

 [iab-europe](https://www.linkedin.com/company/iab-europe/)

iab europe.eu

